



Methamphetamine Labs

Methamphetamine, also known as “meth,” “crank,” or “speed,” is an addictive and powerful illegal drug. The manufacture of methamphetamine in illegal “meth labs” is particularly dangerous.

What is an illegal lab?

An illegal meth or crank lab is one that is set up to produce the illegal drug methamphetamine. Meth labs have been found in many locations including houses, apartments, garages, motel units and vehicles. A number of dangerous chemicals including solvents, metals, salts, and corrosives are used to make methamphetamine. During the drug manufacturing process (cooking), additional dangerous compounds and by-products are produced. The fumes, vapors, residues and spillage associated with cooking can be toxic.

Possible health effects

- The risk of injury from chemical exposure depends on the chemical itself, the concentration, the quantity, and the length and type of exposure. Chemicals may enter the body by being breathed, eaten, injected (by a contaminated needle or accidental skin prick), or absorbed by the skin.
- Exposure to the high levels of contaminants found in methamphetamine labs can cause shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, chemical irritation, and burns to the skin, eyes, mouth and nose, and in severe cases, death.
- Even brief exposure can produce symptoms such as headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue or lethargy.
- **Solvents.** Exposure to solvents can irritate the skin, mucous membranes and respiratory tract, and harm the central nervous system. Solvents are also dangerous because they are flammable and can be explosive.

- **Waste and residues.** Chemical and methamphetamine residues can contaminate buildings, household furnishings and the environment. When unused portions of the chemicals and by-products are dumped on the ground or washed down sinks and toilets and into streams, these toxic wastes can kill vegetation, ruin plumbing and septic tanks and contaminate groundwater. Methamphetamine production can leave residue on ceilings, walls, heating systems, household fixtures, and personal items.
- **Entering a former meth lab.** The site of a former meth lab is contaminated. Before you enter a contaminated site, you must contact the local health department for approval and take all necessary precautions.

Reporting a suspected meth lab

If you observe suspicious activity indicating the presence of a meth lab, report it immediately to your local law enforcement or the Anonymous Meth Hotline at 1-888-609-6384. Signs that a meth lab may be in operation include:

- Windows that are always covered.
- Frequent visitors at all hours.
- Frequent visitors that stay for only 5-10 minutes.
- Chemical odors.
- Excessive garbage specific to making meth.

More information and educational resources concerning methamphetamine and meth labs can be found on the Washington State Department of Health's Clandestine Drug Lab Web site at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/cdl.htm



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